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PASSCHENDAELE 2017

*A Project proposal to commemorate the centenary of the battle of
Passchendaele*

Executive Summary

This project proposal brings together a concept by London Fire Fighter and World War One enthusiast **Mark Hastings** to honour those that fell in world war one and the need to mark the centenary of one of the cruellest episodes of the entire conflict, the battle for Passchendaele in 1917.

The proposed event is a memorial march over two days in November 2017, replicating the march to the front by the troops of the commonwealth from Poperinge, through Ypres and on to Passchendaele, the front line. Representing the troops of the conflict will be ex service men from the armed forces of the commonwealth forces of today and those of the German forces, together with uniformed re enactors and military bands. This living memorial will recapture the spirit of 1917.

This project, known as **Passchendaele 2017**, will add to the events planned by the governments of the UK, Belgium and the Commonwealth providing a visual two day memorial. Through the overarching support and hopefully sponsorship by key ex services and World War One memorial organisations in the UK and Belgium, this event will be a high profile and moving occasion that will highlight the charitable causes of the sponsors and allow the visitors to the Ypres battlefield to watch and participate in an act of remembrance befitting of the 100th anniversary of one of the key events of the first world war.

The expected interest and increase in visitor numbers to the area in support of Passchendaele 2017 will provide significant benefits to local businesses and the tourism industry in Flanders. The project will provide opportunities for parallel events to take place linked to the centenary commemoration that will supplement the remembrance season in Ypres, traditionally focused around the 11th November and the annual Poppy parade at the Menin Gate.

There has been much interest in the concept of **Passchendaele 2017** through discussions, both directly with key organisations and through social media and the internet. Many people from around the world have expressed their support for this project and commented on its uniqueness and suitability to mark the battle.

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1. Introduction

This project proposal sets out a plan to commemorate a major battle within the first world war with the core participants of the memorial event representing the descendants of those who fought and endured on all sides. The project at fruition will act as an international living memorial taking place on the centenary anniversary of the periods of the primary actions of the battle.

The Aim

To unite the nations on both sides of the battle in remembrance of the fallen in the Ypres Salient. To promote peace for the future by observing the lessons of the past.

The Objectives

- *To turn Poperinge into a Commonwealth garrison town for one night for the first time in 100 years in November 2017.*
- *To walk as a commonwealth force from Poperinge to Passchendaele via Ypres and the Menin Gate and then on to Zonnebeke staying overnight. In the morning completing the march up the ridgeline to Passchendaele.*

The Desired Outcome

To commemorate the battle for Passchendaele in 1917 **united in one memorial event.**

2. Background

2014 marks one hundred years since the start of the First World War. The 'War to end all Wars' cost the lives of 16 million people, its effects have touched every generation since peace was declared in 1918 and its repercussions shaped the world that we all live in today.

This historic centenary is to be commemorated by a 4-year program of international acts of remembrance to honour those who served. The governments of the nations involved on all sides have pledged to honour this centenary. The British Prime Minister David Cameron, announced the UK governments intentions to commit to this national period of remembrance, he said;

"Our duty with these commemorations is clear. To honour those who served. To remember those who died. And to ensure that the lessons learnt live with us for ever. And that is exactly what we will do."

There is a willingness to stage commemorative acts throughout the centenary period of the First world War by the UK government and the lead ex services organisations. This is echoed by the central and local governments of France and Belgium with added emphasis upon the actual sites of the conflict as a whole and the separate battles and phases of war from 1914 to 1918.

The approach to planning for these commemorations by the UK, Belgian and French Authorities and lead their agencies would appear to be for events to be staged upon a centenary time line reflecting the key events and locations of the conflict.

It is within this concept that the project **Passchendaele 2017** sits.

3. The Vision Of The Project

Between the dates of the 4th and the 6th November 2017 the scene will be set for an international commemoration of the battle of Passchendaele. The project will deliver an event that will bring together many individuals, families of the fallen, organisations whose purpose is to support ex service personnel from all countries, local businesses and residents and other interested parties to focus on a period of remembrance and acknowledgement centred around the key locations of the Passchendaele battlefield.

The principle of Passchendaele 2017 is:

" This project is dedicated to all of the fallen from both sides of the line in the Ypres Salient, it aims to motivate as many retired servicemen from all the countries that fought as enemies to lead in a single act of remembrance "

The project aims to provide a focal point for international interest in commemorating the battle for Passchendaele. With events taking place around the Ypres Salient on the centenary dates , **Passchendaele 2017** will serve as a centre piece representing the participating armies and their advance to the battlefield.

4. Historical Context

Of all of the theatres of war from 1914 to 1918 none were more iconic than those that represented the 'Western Front' and of these none more so than the battlefields of Flanders and the Ypres Salient .

Ypres played a key role on the western front , It protected the routes to the coastal ports, essential to the allies for supplying the front line. The Ypres Salient whilst shelled almost to oblivion never fell into German hands.

By 1917, Britain had been at war for three years and yet the front line had barely moved. This would be the final year of deadlock. It was dominated by two epic battles one at Arras and the second in the mud swamps of Ypres. For a generation the name of **Passchendaele** would become synonymous with slaughter on a inhuman scale.

Beginning in July of 1917, the struggle for Passchendaele finally ended on the 10th November when what was left of the village was captured by British and Canadian forces. The village lay barely five miles beyond the starting point of the offensive. It had taken over three months, resulting in 325,000 Allied and 260,000 German casualties. The village was obliterated from the map and its inhabitants gone.

In the battlefields around the salient there are approximately 90,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers whose remains could not be identified for burial in a grave marked with their name. Similarly, there are also believed to be about 90,000 German soldiers whose remains were never identified as was the case with the remains of many French soldiers found on the battlefields. For the 90,000 missing Commonwealth Forces there are four memorials in the Ypres Salient which cover the whole period of the First World War;

- *The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing.*
- *The Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing.*
- *The New Zealand Memorial (Tyne Cot Cemetery).*
- *The Messines Ridge (New Zealand) Memorial.*

The names of missing German soldiers are inscribed on oak panels and bronze tablets at Langemark German cemetery and French soldiers are commemorated in several ossuaries in the area.

Since the end of the First World War these iconic areas of commemoration have provided the focal point for acts of remembrance by heads of state, dignitaries, families and visitors from all of the nations whose servicemen fought in the Ypres Salient area.

5. The Locations in Context 2013

Now completely rebuilt and its name changed simply to Passendale, this quiet unremarkable village returned to its historical occupation as a farming community between the two world wars. Now only known for the production of beer and cheese, Passendale bears virtually no scars of its infamous past.

Whilst the town of Ypres and its surrounding towns and villages have a trade base in agriculture and the service sector, tourism linked to the First World War is a major element of the local economy. It is predicted that two million people will visit Belgium's World War One sites between 2014 and 2018.

The Flemish tourism industry and the Belgian Government have invested more than 50m euros (£42m) in centenary events between 2014 and 2018. The anniversary period will be marketed strongly and is likely to make the many First World War attractions in the region even more popular than they were before.

In a normal year, the Ypres salient area accommodates 350,000 visitors - mainly British, Belgian, Dutch and a number from the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This is set to rise to 500,000. Many come to find their ancestor's final resting place, while others are simply intrigued by the history. The Centenary period has sparked a construction boom in the region, with hotels adding extra rooms, museums expanding, new tours formulated and an increase in parking spaces by the most important cemeteries.

The Ypres Salient area, within its modern setting is served by good transport links by bus and train, the area supports a network of modern dual carriageways, link roads and AutoRoute's. The area as a base for historical tourism has a diverse range of hotels, bed and breakfast establishments and camp sites, further supported by numerous cafes restaurants and retail outlets.

This Project focuses on key locations linked to the battle for Passchendaele:

i. Poperinge.

Poperinge was a rear area for allied troops in The First World War. It provided a rest area and served as a garrison supporting front line operations. Situated in Poperinge was Talbot House also known as 'Toc H' a now iconic rest and recuperation hostel for troops returning from front line duties. Toc H still stands in Poperinge and is a focal point for the commemoration of the First World War in the town. Poperinge is a small historic town reliant upon the Service sector, tourism and links to beer production, it lies 7 miles west of Ypres separated by the N308 road and the modern R33 dual carriageway which supports major traffic flow through the area and public transport links to Ypres. Poperinge is proposed as the start point for Passchendaele 2017 as it signifies the march to the front leading to the Passchendaele campaign.

ii. Vlamertinge

Vlamertinge sits on the N308 road between Poperinghe and Ypres. During the First World War the town lay just outside of the range of German Artillery shelling. Troops passed through this town en route to the front. Vlamertinge acts as a way point for Passchendaele 2017.

iii. Ypres

Ypres will be the main focus of day 1 of Passchendaele 2017. The town is the main tourist and commercial centre for the modern Salient area. Ypres provides a centre piece for the event before reaching its destination at Passendale. This project proposes that the route through Ypres provides a high profile element of the overall project that joins the historical contexts of Ypres and the Menin Gate and the site of the battlefields of Passchendaele.

iv. Zonnebeke

Now a quiet modern village situated in the centre of the Salient, 7Kms from Ypres, the whole area was destroyed during the First World War. Left abandoned until the early 1920's, the former inhabitants slowly rebuilt the village returning it to agriculture. Zonnebeke is the site of the Passchendaele museum situated within the



6. Strategy – Outline Detail

A. The Main Participants.

Whilst this event will undoubtedly attract many people wishing to take part, the focus will be on the organised walking groups representing the armies of the Passchendaele battlefield in 1917. For this reason the emphasis will primarily be on participants being men and women who are serving or who have served in their own countries armed forces.

Also participating will be uniformed re enactors representing the participating armies, dressed in contemporary uniforms of the period with associated equipment. These groups will add historical context to the event and serve to illustrate the vision of the troops of 1917 on the original route to Passchendaele.

The participants will be formed into 'company's' for ease of administration and for contemporary similarity, preserving where possible the formations of troops as would have been witnessed in 1917. The participants will be required to be self sufficient for the duration of the event and dressed and equipped for the conditions prevalent at the time.

There will be a need for management, marshalling and support staff for the event with liaison personnel available to ensure the smooth running of the event and its integration into local business continuity and organised events. The detailed planning arrangements and requirements are not included within this document.

B. Timings and Locations

The participants would be expected to arrive at Poperinge on the 4th November in readiness for the event start the next day. The proposed start for the event is 09:00 on the 5th November 2017. The starting positions will be the Commonwealth start at Poperinge and the German start at Menen*. The participating groups will be required to Muster by 08:00 to ensure that the start time is achieved without undue delay. The Commonwealth group will reach Vlamertinge at approximately 10:15 and then at the Market Square adjacent to the Cloth Hall in Ypres at 11:30. The event will stop at Ypres for a parade which will feature a military band. The parade will move off from Cloth Hall at 12:30 and proceed through the Menin Gate where a salute will be taken as the parade passes out of Ypres along the Menin Road. The group will reach the Passchendaele Museum at Zonnebeke at approximately 15:00 where the participants will stop until the morning.

* The Menen route is still at the concept stage

On 6th November 2017 at 09:00 The commonwealth group will muster and depart from Zonnebeke to proceed to Passendale village at 10:00, arriving at approximately 11:00, the group will gather at the church in the village square at 12:00 where a short multi faith memorial service will be held. This will mark the end of the memorial march with the participants making their way off independently.

C. Parallel Events and the Local Economy

If the project reaches its potential as a centre piece for the commemoration of the battle for Passchendaele it can reasonably be expected that there will be a number of parallel events taking place that will interact with the main march as it proceeds along its route over the two day period. These events will be synergistic with the march and will enable the event to be broadened out to allow the public and the expected enhanced number of visitors to be part of the wider commemorations that will surround the Passchendaele 2017 march. This will provide significant benefits to the local economy by extending the interest of the visiting public along the route of the march taking advantage of, for example, retail sales, event catering outlets, memorabilia, battlefield tours, entertainment and accommodation.

Passchendaele 2017 will form a central part of the programmed events commemorating the battle planned by the local authorities, tourist agencies and businesses. The participation of ex services organisations and their members will add value to stand alone events and will provide an excellent marketing opportunity for the local tourism based economy. This will enhance the visitor experience and will provide a similar international focal point to remembrance as is seen by the annual Poppy Parade on the 11th November, this event greatly inflates the numbers of visitors to the places of interest within the Ypres area compared to normal tourism figures.

7. Stake Holder Analysis

In order for this project to be successful, consideration needs to be given to the identification of bodies, organisations and individuals that would have direct or indirect connection with the project at any stage and a determination of their interest and influence over the project either wholly or in part.

Research has been conducted into this process and table 1 represents the major stakeholders identifiable at the project proposal stage and management actions applicable :

Stakeholder	Stake in the Project	Potential Impact on Project	What does the Project expect the Stakeholder to provide?	Perceived attitudes and/or risks	Stakeholder Management Strategy	Responsibility
Ex services Organisations UK. Royal British Legion. Help for Hero's.SSAFA. BLESMA etc	Project Sponsor Representing ex services charities. Project gives an opportunity to be Involved with commemoration in Belgium on key dates.	High	Advertising. Marketing Access to funding Consultation	Supporting of project. Project will add value to charitable interests. Reputational interest in project.	Could include; Involvement in Project Steering Board, Regular updating meeting with project manager.	Governance, Guidance,
Belgian Ex services Orgs And Memorial Associations (last Post Assn)	Project Sponsor Support for charitable status Project gives an opportunity to be Involved with commemoration in Belgium on key dates.	High	Commitment to project. Advertising. Marketing Access to funding Consultation	Reputational interest in project.	Involvement in Project Steering Board, Regular updating meeting with project manager	Governance Guidance Local Liaison
Local Councils Ypres Zonnebeke	Representing members of the community and ensuring that the project outcome is beneficial to members of the local community	Medium	Contribute to project. plays lead role in ensuring public support . Supports Local commercial involvement	Medium involvement in project overall. Major interest is reputational by involvement and promoting local economy	Involvement in user briefing and user groups. Keep informed	Supporting Local economy. Tourism promotion
Belgian / Flanders Tourist Boards	Tourism promotion in support of 2014-18 events	Low	Marketing support	Supportive	Keep informed.	Event publication.
Flanders WW1 Museums and Memorials	Key stakeholder. Project enhances visitor experience	High	Support for the project. Capitalisation of increased visitor numbers.	Supportive	Involved at all stages	Support for event marketing strategy
Commonwealth Ex Service Orgs	Project gives an opportunity to be Involved with commemoration in Belgium on key dates.	High	Marketing and support for event in Country of Origin	Supportive	Keep informed.	Advice and support for Commonwealth attendees. Representation at event.
Local Businesses/ Chambers of Commerce	Provide services to event. Provide mitigation for event activities.	High	Commitment to project.	Supportive/Tentative	Keep informed	Supporting Local economy. Tourism promotion

Local General Public	Local hosts.	Medium	Support for project.	Lack of understanding reduced support. Financial concern Disruption	Regular updates. Communications strategy. Champion. Increase interest	Hosts.
Local Support Services Health, Police, Highways	Event mitigation	Medium	Support and guidance. Commitment for operation of the project	Supportive/ tentative Cost/ Impact Versus Local benefit	Regular updates. Communications strategy.	Support and advice for operational aspect of the event

Table 1. Stake holder Analysis and Management Strategy

As a non exhaustive list of stakeholders, the above table identifies those that have been identified and initially researched as being in key positions with regard to this project. Some consideration has also been given to the impact of those stakeholders upon the project overall and the outline strategy for the management of these bodies. The detailed project planning would definitively identify these stakeholders and further research would identify the power, interest and influence of these groups and individuals in relation to this project. Further detailed planning would set out the management priorities and actions for the positive inclusion within the project of those identified .

8. Project Management

The arrangements for project management have not been included in this document.

9. Project Sponsorship

As part of the overall project definition for [Passchendaele 2017](#) it is vital that sponsorship of this project sits at the most appropriate level and with a body or individual that has the professional and reputational attributes necessary to champion the project from concept to operational delivery. It is for this reason that it is considered appropriate that the project sponsorship should be aimed at the Royal British Legion as the overarching body covering the UK commemorations for the centenary of the Great War. It would also be considered

appropriate that this be considered jointly with a similar commemorative organisation in Flanders.

10. Project Risk Management

Risk management applicable to this project has been limited to three areas at the proposal stage. It is prudent to assume that these particular issues will require consideration at the early stages of planning and may well influence the implementation strategy and project delivery timings. The risks considered have been set against the risk analysis grid based on Likelihood and Impact at Fig 2. and annotated 1,2 and 3 upon the grid.

		Impact				
Likelihood		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
	Almost Certain	Medium	High	High	Very High	Very High
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	High	Very High
	Possible	Low	Medium 2	1 High 3	High	Very High
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Fig 2. Risk Analysis Grid

Risk 1.

Weather conditions prevalent at the proposed time of the event (November 4th to the 6th 2017) fall within the autumn /winter period and could be subject to possible seasonal adverse weather, limiting the potential for the event at its intended.

Control Measures.

- Consider timing of event to coincide with centenary anniversary at different stage of the Passchendaele campaign (although this would not be historically accurate).
- Include within planning and delivery arrangements for inclement weather for attending groups and individuals. As is the case for the annual Poppy Parade period.

Risk 2.

The event conflicting with the planning and delivery of the annual Poppy Day Parade at Ypres (11th November). Which may incur business continuity issues for local businesses and services.

Control Measures

- Liaison with local event organisers to establish plan for integration of both events within the considered timeframe.
- Marketing of events to highlight the benefit of an extended period of commemoration and with it the associated benefit to local business and service providers

Risk 3.

Oversubscription of event with regard to the interest and associated numbers of attendees and the knock effect to local service providers

Control Measures

- Adequate liaison between project management with affected stakeholders.
- Accurate market research into the potential interest for the event is carried out as an integral part of the project planning and that local impact is established to ensure parameters of the event scale.

11. Market Research

The concept of **Passchendaele 2017** has been considered and circulated to groups and individuals for the last two years. Primarily by personal contact and via social networking, the working plan has become known to a wide spectrum of people. Social networking, predominantly through facebook and email contact, to disseminate information about the project, has shown that there is a large number of interested enthusiasts and groups keen to be part of the project at fruition in 2017. The interest shown via social networking has risen steadily since May 2012 and at present over 1500 people are making regular contact regarding the progress of the project.

Personal contact by the project originator, Mark Hastings, has also attracted interest from organisations and individuals that represent key stake holdings in this project. So far contact and discussion has taken place with;

- The Royal British Legion
- The Great War Society UK
- The Australian Great War Association
- The Representation of The Flemish Government in the UK (Flanders House)
- The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

WORKING
TOGETHER

→ THE AUSTRALIAN GREAT WAR ASSOCIATION

Whilst social media and internet placement as methods of establishing potential 'market' interest are not specific market testing relative to this project proposal, the ease of contact and wide reach of internet information and advertising does give a feel for the range and depth of interest that exists for this proposal.

In terms of the direct contact with the organisations and individual mentioned, it can be assumed that there is interest in this project being achieved and that the concept does have a bona fide place within the planned centenary commemorations and specifically those aimed at Passchendaele on the dates specified and the place of the actual battle.

In early October 2013, a small group associated with this project plus a group from a local WW1 commemorative society based in Ypres participated in a real time small scale rehearsal in which the timings, locations and logistical concerns were examined. The outcome of this event demonstrated that the planning as described within this proposal remain viable.

12. Costs And Financial Planning

The costs and financial planning associated with this project are not include in this outline proposal.

13. Contacts

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Passchendaele Tommy



Passchendaele 2017 (Facebook Group)

Richard Squire November 2013.

